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# GERMANY'S POSE FOR AN ADVANTAGEOUS PEACE

BY DAVID JAYNE HILL

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THE state of mind and the political situation in Germany when the conditions of peace have been imposed and must be executed, will perhaps be entirely different from what they are today. At present, Germany, virtually reduced to military impotence, is seeking to procure for herself the most favorable possible terms of peace.

The peace to which Germany was looking forward at the time the armistice was requested was expected to be arrived at by a process of bilateral debate on the meaning of the fourteen rubrics of peace proposed in January, 1918, by the President of the United States. Those rubrics, it was thought, were so broad in their scope and so indefinite in some of their applications, that it appeared possible to interpret them in such a manner as to procure for Germany a peace that would, in effect, be a greater victory than the German armies could ever hope to secure by war. The policy that was then adopted and is at this time dominant in the German mind is an effort to obtain an economic victory at the cost of a military surrender,—an economic victory which would completely justify an acknowledgment of military defeat if it could be secured by the acceptance of the German construction of the fourteen rubrics considered as the terms, and the only terms, of peace.

Little information, it is true, has been given publicity regarding the plans and policies of Germany for securing the most favorable peace that may be possible. It is, perhaps, not without a purpose that comparative silence on that subject has been preserved; still, there has been a very distinct outcropping of what is latent in the minds of German diplomatists. " All the belligerents," Count von Bernstorff

has recently allowed himself to say, " have accepted the President's fourteen points, and the only question to be discussed is their interpretation." The new German Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Count von Brockdorff-Rautzau, has made a similar statement, and the *Tageblatt* of Berlin supports this view with the declaration, " No peace must be signed which differs by the breadth of a hair from the principles of President Wilson's fourteen points, which Germany has accepted, and the Entente willingly or unwillingly has signed."

It is needless here to repeat the interpretations of which these rubrics seem to be susceptible. It is sufficient to note that they are held to provide for the following privileges which, after peace, Germany, equally with other nations, might be permitted to enjoy, under the protection of " mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity " provided by " a general association of nations ":

1. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, alike in peace and in war;

2. The removal of all economic barriers, and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions;

3. Free and open-minded adjustment of all colonial claims, unprejudiced by the actual results of the war;

4. Entire national self-determination, which would logically include perfect freedom in choosing and maintaining a future form of government; and

5. Admission on equal terms into a general League of Nations.

A peace based upon these conditions, and involving only the surrender of what Germany had no claim to before the war, would render her not only a victor in all the substantial elements of victory, but would leave her in population the largest political unit on the Continent of Europe, with a clear accession by union with Austria of more than eight million of the Teutonic race; and, after extruding some four million of her present subjects belonging to other races, would give her a net gain of some four or five million souls and a considerable amount of new territory. When the peace was signed, the zone of occupation evacuated, and the occupying troops demobilized, Germany, whether a republic or a monarchy, the choice being freely open to her, with untouched economic resources and organization, no matter what proportionate disarmament might be imposed, would be by far the strongest Military State in Europe. She would possess

racial unity, territorial enlargement, economic preeminence on the Continent, and military security. Even though she had not been defeated in the field, such a peace would be an advantageous one for Germany to make, a more satisfactory one indeed than she could ever hope to win by the victory of her armies on the field of battle.

How then has Germany hoped to secure such a peace?

The course of procedure was clearly marked out for her. Such a peace could never be made with the Kaiser as the head of the Empire. That had been plainly declared. What, above everything else, was demanded of Germany was that she should repudiate her Hohenzollern dynasty and take her place among the nations as a free, self-governing people; for a "people," it was assumed, when it takes government into its own hands, is always just, honorable, and trustworthy; while rulers alone are untrustworthy. Let the rulers and the military caste, therefore, be repudiated, and peace would be easily obtainable.

What nation, weary of a fruitless war, seeing its army, after a supreme effort to break through the enemy's reinforced lines, steadily and inevitably retreating, its territory about to be invaded, its cities bombarded and assaulted from the air,—what nation, I say, could be expected to miss such an opportunity to make a profitable peace?

Germany was too prudent to lose such a chance of advantage. The Kaiser's own appointed Imperial Chancellor, accountable only to him, therefore, asked for an armistice, in order that such a peace might be negotiated.

"Who are you, who ask for an armistice, with a view to peace, and whom do you represent?", was, in effect, demanded of the Imperial Chancellor. "Do you speak for the German people?"

The Imperial Chancellor was silent. How could he speak for the German people, with whom he had nothing to do, and to whom he was not responsible? The answer must be better staged.

It is a new officer, therefore, the representative of what poses as a new government, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who responds to the question intended for the Imperial Chancellor and writes for him a certificate of character.

"The present German Government," he declares, as if speaking by some new popular authority,—"the present Ger-

man Government, which has undertaken the responsibility for this step toward peace, has been formed by conferences and in agreement with the great majority of the Reichstag. The Chancellor, supported in all his actions by the will of this majority, speaks in the name of the German Government and of the German people."

Thus, at last, the long silent "German people," the presumably just, honorable, and trustworthy German people, who were assumed not to be responsible for the war, but rather the victims of a false and shameless autocracy too infamous to be dealt with, have, it is made to appear, really spoken. They have spoken, however, only through the voice of a "great majority of the Reichstag,"—a body which from the beginning had with unanimity supported the war and all its atrocious procedure; a body which only for a moment found a voice with which to speak the mind of the people, and having been for that one moment indistinctly vocal, has since subsided into the silence of the grave! If the German Reichstag really represents the German people, why is it not, in this great emergency, at its post of duty now?

Germany, in this fateful hour, seems to prefer to have no responsible government. Is it because it is more difficult to hold accountable, and on that ground to condemn and punish, a nation without a responsible government than a nation which can be on specific charges indicted and arraigned for its past misdeeds?

Say what we will of the Kaiser's personal régime, it was at least one which, whether trustworthy or not, could be held accountable for its crimes. But the Kaiser's Government is alleged to be no longer in existence. In order that it might disappear, he was urged to abdicate. He professed to have done so, and went to Holland. Germany appeared satisfied, but the outside world demanded the evidence of his abdication; and it was not till three weeks after his retreat, that, in order to satisfy foreign demands, on the 29th of November, a document was finally signed by the alleged ex-Kaiser.

The reason for his withdrawal from Germany William II has himself frankly stated. "I go to Holland," he is reported to have declared, "in order to facilitate peace"; and no one has contradicted this statement of why he was going. The German people, it seems, when the Kaiser's armies were beaten in the field, suddenly wished him gone, sent forth, as

it were, like the " scapegoat " of ancient times, into the wilderness, not because his people hated him or considered him an arch-criminal, not because they themselves wished to destroy him—as they had, and still have, an opportunity to do—but because it appeared that he might be laden with their sins, and his going with this burden would " facilitate peace " by consigning responsibility to the wilderness of oblivion.

And why was it supposed that his going would facilitate peace? Was it not because an irresponsible nation can demand easier terms than a responsible ruler?

The just, honorable, and trustworthy " people of Germany " seem to be pleading at the judgment bar of history, and preparing to say at the peace table: " We demand peace because we are an innocent and a defenseless people. First of all, we are a ' people,' and how can you punish a whole people? Has it not been said that there is something sacred and sacrosanct in a ' people '? You are trying 'to make the world safe for democracy.' We are now a democracy. See, we have dismissed the Kaiser! We shall have no more of him. Have mercy upon us, Kameraden! We accept all your glorious democratic principles. Now, undoubtedly, you are ready, since you would make the world safe for democracy, to make our democracy an asylum of safety for us! "

Here is a change of plan, but is there any change of heart behind these pretensions? Have all Germans, or most Germans, suddenly become Social Democrats, clamoring for a Socialist Republic? Where are all those millions of troops? Where are all those hundreds of thousands of officers, those Prussian generals who are said to have made the Kaiser declare war? Have they gone to Holland? Only a few of them. The vast majority, armed, organized, waiting for a word of command, are in Germany; and they are silent, as silent as the Reichstag. Why are they silent? They are silent because silence is the order of the day, a token of irresponsibility and acquiescence in a new order of things. They are waiting to see if an economic victory can be won. If it is won, they will have their reward. If it is not won, they will, perhaps, have something to say in the future when the peace has been concluded, and is yet to be executed, when the Allied armies are demobilized, and when the rest of Europe has gone to sleep.

There was, before the armistice, no serious revolution in

Germany. There has been hunger, there has been weariness, there has been joy at the cessation of battle, there has been a vision of peace, of comfort and tranquility. There has been also an emergence of Bolshevism, the weapon which Germany skillfully forged and thrust into the vitals of Russia; but Germany expects to receive no serious wound from this weapon. There is no clear evidence of change in Germany, no movement beyond street fights and bread mobs, such as may occur in any city when the conditions of life are hard and when the passions of low-browed men are for a time let loose. The Councils of Workmen and Soldiers solemnly infest the Herrenhaus under the protection of a machine-gun; but the generals know that at any moment in Germany they could make short work of all this assemblage of the rags and tatters of Bolshevism. But the time is not opportune. The disease of Bolshevism, in so far as it is a social malady, may safely be permitted in Germany to run its course. It illustrates to the middle-class what the dangers of democracy may be. It shows to the world how wide the infection may become, if peace is not quickly made. It presents to the Allies the puzzling problem how to obtain redress from a people who disavow accountability and are too broken and disorganized to enforce the duties of a responsible state.

How real is a revolution when the domestic courts are in session, when the bureaucracy is administering affairs, and when life and property are not in great immediate peril? The Germans are an exceptionally orderly people. Their demonstrations are customarily innocuous. Their habits of life are prudent. Their burghers are not stricken with poverty, and their proprietors, accustomed to the use of arms, are able to guard, and are determined to defend, their own material interests. When a real revolution appears, if it does appear, they will unite their forces and rally to their own protection. What they wish at present to exhibit to their conquerors is a starving population incapable of bearing new burdens, an unsettled public order that may prove a contagion to their neighbors, an effort for democracy that will be an apology for the past, and above all a situation which will excite the sympathy of the credulous and the support of class interests of a revolutionary temper in the population of those countries which they would represent as their oppressors for capitalistic gain.

You wish the evidence of this? Then listen to the speech of Hindenburg to his army, on November 13th at the moment when he had decided that it was an economic rather than a military victory for which Germany was to look. Does he pretend that he or they had fought under merely autocratic orders? Does he confess that the course of Germany was wrong? Does he call for a change of heart, or merely for a change of policy? He says:

"Germany up to today has used her arms with honour. In hard fighting the soldiers have held the enemy away from the German frontier in order to save the Fatherland from the horrors of war. In view of our enemies' increasing numbers and the collapse of our allies and our economic difficulties, our Government was resolved to accept the hard terms of the armistice; but we leave the fight, in which for more than four years we have resisted a world of enemies, proudly and with heads erect."

If we turn to what calls itself a government of democracy, what do we hear from the alleged Premier, Ebert, when he welcomes the troops coming home to Berlin? Does he repudiate the purpose of the war? Does he inform the returning soldiers that they have made useless sacrifices, or have been engaged in an unworthy cause, at the command of an autocracy in whose downfall they should rejoice? Tens of thousands of men march by still bearing their arms, filing between other tens of thousands of people who are supposed to have made a revolution, who welcome them as joyful spectators, the troops laden with garlands, as they tramp on to the loud blare of bands of music intoning, "*Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles.*"

"Your deeds and sacrifices," the Premier declares, "are unexampled. No enemy overcame you. Only when the preponderance of our opponents in men and material grew ever heavier did we abandon the struggle.

"You endured indescribable sufferings, accomplished incomparable deeds, and gave, year after year, proofs of your unmistakable courage. You protected the homeland from invasions, sheltered your wives, children, and parents from flames and slaughter and preserved the nation's workshops and fields from devastation.

"With deepest emotion the homeland thanks you. You can return with heads erect. Never have men done or suffered more than you."

Is this a proclamation of democracy? Is the world to be "made safe" by this adulation of a career of national crime? What can be said after this to the heroes who are told that in serving the Kaiser they were nobly defending the Fatherland, if for this glorious service they are asked to toil in the fields and the workshops to pay for the damage they have done to Belgium, to France, to Poland, and to other lands which they have, without just cause, ruthlessly invaded and cruelly devastated? Can they be urged to make reparation? Or will they think it unjust that, having suffered so much in a cause so noble, they must be treated as if they were the perpetrators of outrages for which they, their children, and their children's children must be held accountable?

Here is no note of penitence or contrition. It is the same Germany, speaking with the voice of Hindenburg and Ebert, which accepted the Kaiser as its glorious War Lord, that believed, or professed to believe, in the divine right of conquest, and threatened innocent nations with the extortion of enormous indemnities, covering not only the total cost of their exploits but sufficient to enrich the nation and render it the most opulent in the world.

The attitude of Germany in accepting just conditions of peace, will be the test of the character of the German people with whom in the future other nations must live and deal. The first necessity to a recognition of reformation is the disposition to repay, in so far as that is possible, at whatever sacrifice, the damage they have inflicted. If exemption from this obligation is claimed on the ground of irresponsibility, it will imply a degradation of character as deep as that evinced by the predatory enterprise in which all Germany was to profit by collecting the costs of the war from its innocent victims.

Without reparation for the injuries inflicted, there can be no real peace. The example of such an unpunished exploit would remain as an encouragement to future crime.

Will the German people, whose sense of justice, honor, and moral obligation is soon to be put to a crucial test, voluntarily accept the burdens which a just peace will impose upon them? If not, what confidence can be placed in the proposal to make the world safe for democracy, and what will be the world's judgment upon the ethical standards of democracy itself? We shall soon learn from the conduct of Germany, now speaking only through a mask of democracy,

whether or not we are to ascribe all the enormities of the war to the depravity and malevolence of her rulers, against whom, until the moment of defeat, the people offered no protest; and whether or not a people, left free to express its own character, will accept the burdens of an act of justice.

On account of the Great War, in which their duty rendered it necessary that they should participate, the people of the United States of America have not only freely offered to the cause of justice the lives of tens of thousands of their sons, but have paid, or will have paid, probably over thirty billion dollars, which they have not yet demanded should be returned to them. The whole expenditure of the war, by the Allies, considered merely as a matter of monetary sacrifice, is said to exceed two hundred billion dollars; and yet this gigantic sum, which it will require generations to make good, is one of the least and one of the most easily repaired of the damages inflicted by this assault upon humanity.

The manufacturing plants of Germany are practically intact, and their escape from devastation affords the Germans every advantage over their neighbors in the resumption of their normal industries. The loss of man-power through death and mutilation may amount approximately to three or four million men, but this loss will probably be made good to the extent of at least one half by the growth of population during the period of nearly five years from the beginning of the war to the conclusion of peace.

The greatest hardship for the Germans will be the deficiency of raw materials for manufacture; such as cotton, wool, copper, iron, rubber, and many others. They will doubtless plead for these at the peace table as absolutely essential to them. If they were wholly withheld, it would, of course, be impossible for the Germans to pay any indemnities, because they can only pay to the extent to which they are able to earn the means of payment. This is so obvious that it will probably be strongly urged upon the Allies, in order to procure the means to facilitate Germany's economic rehabilitation. "You must either excuse us from all payments of indemnities," it will no doubt be pleaded, "or you must grant us a full supply of the raw materials to which we may give value by our skill and workmanship, in order that we may sell them at prices which will enable us to live and at the same time create an increment of value for your benefit."

If, however, this argument should prevail, its inevitable consequence should not be overlooked. If raw materials are furnished to the extent of Germany's demand, German manufactures will at once obtain an immense acceleration, German goods will flood every market, and the less favored countries will be driven out of the world's marts by an excess of German production and German methods of commercial exploitation. It would not require many years for Germany, with these advantages, even though promising the payment of heavy money indemnities, to have so taken possession of the world's markets as to make the arrangement a profitable bargain. While the Belgians and the French were slowly recovering their productive capacity by a restoration of their ruined industrial plants, Germany would completely forestall them in securing foreign trade. Such a programme would, in effect, be the formation of a partnership in which, to secure a portion of Germany's gains in the form of an indemnity, they would surrender to her the conduct of foreign business, while they themselves were engaged in merely recovering to some extent the productive efficiency of which Germany's invasion had deprived them.

To appreciate the full significance of such an arrangement, it is necessary to consider that, while Germany's manufacturing plants have not been in any way impaired, and are ready to begin operation, those of Belgium and Northwestern France have been practically destroyed. It is reported that 26,000 factories in the French districts occupied by the Germans are either wholly demolished or stripped of their machinery; which, with the looms and other portable means of industry of Belgium, has been carried into Germany. Thousands of square miles of rich agricultural land have been so deeply plowed with shells as to be utterly unfit for cultivation. Houses and public edifices have been left in ruins and can be replaced only by years of labor. Valuable mines have been rendered useless, and it will require both time and expense to restore them. It would be unjust, even though the money value of all these objects were eventually paid in cash, to impose upon the inhabitants of these devastated countries the concentration of all their skill and labor upon the work of reconstruction while those who had destroyed them were profiting by expanding their own world-wide trade. At the end of the period when the restoration was complete, the money paid would have been spent in the

work of reconstruction, and these unfortunate countries, having in the meantime devoted their energies entirely to this task of restoration, would be no better off than they were when the war began, while German industry and trade domination would in the meantime have been definitely and perhaps permanently established.

The remedy which justice would seem to demand is evident. Whatever of value has been carried into Germany should be immediately brought back and replaced. The reconstruction of houses, factories, and other edifices should then be speedily brought to completion by German workmen at Germany's expense, aided by those natives who for the time being have no other employment, all their labor to be paid for by Germany. In so far as the German shipyards can replace the tonnage destroyed, they should be at once employed for the purpose; and only such ships should be allowed for German trade as may be necessary for the distribution of Germany's just proportion of overseas commerce. The other forms of indemnity would not be cancelled by this process of restoration; but the liquidation of these obligations might be ultimately accomplished by the saving of all expense for military purposes beyond mere domestic police duty in Germany, by special import licenses on German goods, and by the appropriation of a percentage of the profits of Germany's coal and potash mines.

This would be undoubtedly a heavy burden for a conquered people to bear; but it is less than it was the German purpose to impose upon the innocent victims of their imperial schemes of conquest.

Has the alleged German democracy any intention gracefully to accept such obligations?

It will be noted that under the fourteen rubrics of peace proposed by the President of the United States, reparation and indemnity are not included. "Belgium," the seventh rubric declares, "the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored;" but the restoration here referred to, as the following words imply, seems to relate to "the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with other free nations," while no mention is made of the reparation of material damages.

Under the eighth rubric it is proposed that "All French territory should be freed, and the invaded portions restored"; but the implication here appears to be the same as

that under the seventh rubric. In both cases it is the restoration of territory, not reparation that is specified.

Will the German representatives at the Peace Congress frankly admit Germany's responsibility for the injuries inflicted and offer to repair them as justice requires them to do; or will they plead that the "terms" suggested by these fourteen rubrics are the only terms that were accepted, and that the imposition of others is a breach of faith?

The truth is that, in a military sense, Germany was defeated. Her generals have admitted that it was useless to continue the fight. Had no basis of settlement been proposed, the alternative to the invasion of Germany by the Allies and an allied victory proclaimed at Berlin would have been an immediate unconditional surrender. The terms of the peace would then have been the conditions to be laid down by the conquerors. They probably will be thus laid down, even as it is. But who will deny that there would have been a clearer case for the conditions which the Allies must in justice impose, and less opportunity for a plea that only the fourteen rubrics should be discussed and Germany's interpretation of their meaning considered, if the surrender were in no way connected with the alleged "terms" which both belligerents are assumed to have accepted?

As the case stands, Germany will undoubtedly voice her interpretation of those "terms" at the peace congress, and will insist that they be regarded in their entirety as a body of conditions, each involving the others. It will, no doubt, be claimed that the five advantages to Germany referred to near the beginning of this article, should be accorded to her; and that conditions not mentioned under any of the rubrics be not applied. It will also be urged that conditions ought not to be made more burdensome for a new popular régime in Germany than were contemplated at the time the armistice was signed and the alleged "terms" accepted, while the Kaiser's culpable Government was still in command.

All these claims and pleas will prove unavailing, for the reason that they are not just. What gives them plausibility is Germany's assertion that she was led to expect an advantageous peace on certain conditions, and that those conditions have now been fulfilled. The implied condition was, it is held, that a free people could receive better terms than a guilty autocracy. The specific conditions were contained in the fourteen rubrics. On these "terms" a nation that

still takes pride in the cause for which its armies fought, that abandoned the struggle only because its force was exhausted, and that has made no apology for a crime in which it participated, now demands to be received as an equal partner in an international order yet to be established; if, indeed, any "general association of nations" can ever be formed which will "guarantee" the conditions which these rubrics suggest.

All this does not destroy, and it should not obscure, the demands of justice to the nations that have suffered invasion and devastation at the hands of Germany. The whole scheme of the rubrics may have been an error. If it has really deceived Germany, or if its application should leave the injured without redress, it was, indeed, morally and diplomatically a mistake. The demands of justice, however, remain unshaken. There can be no binding agreement to do wrong or to escape doing what is right. The alleged terms of peace may have to be interpreted again and again; but, wholly irrespective of any interpretation, reparation by Germany should be made in Belgium and France, not to mention other devastated countries, or the coming peace will be as wicked as the war.

This reparation, apparently, Germany does not intend to make, unless forced to do so.

"No State," says Maximilian Harden, who now assumes the rôle of interpreter of the Germany of which he has long dreamed,—"no State that was snatched along into this flood of the Deluge can expect other indemnity than those which can be effected by thrift and savings"; which, he makes clear, must be the effort of each people for itself. There are to be, then, no indemnities paid by Germany. "Taxes and customs duties," he says, "that would yield even the interest on the tens of billions of debt would necessarily paralyze trade and industry in competition with America, Australia, and the Yellow World; would necessarily grind to bits the idea of private property. . . . What then shall happen? Something that has never happened before. . . . Let Europe's war debt become a treasure of atonement. Let the war loan certificates of all the European States that have participated in this war . . . serve as legal tender, guaranteed by all debtors; a form of money which in every land that is subject to the jurisdiction of the arbitration court must be accepted in payment in any transaction and by any creditor at its full face value!"

Thus all the national war debts, Germany's included, it is proposed, should be pooled in one great "peace fund" and placed under a central control to prevent the outbreak of future war! "The court of the nations," so runs the scheme,—"serves as trustee of the treasure, and sets aside therefrom in equal parts out of the certificates of indebtedness of all the States what it needs for itself and its militia. It may punish disobedience of its judgments in the case of any individual State by means of a money penalty, declaring valueless all the circulating certificates of that State, calling them in, or destroying them, in the case of any State that breaks the peace without previously being itself bodily and vitally threatened. Here," this writer continues, "is where a community of European citizenship beckons us. Thus the Continent would be delivered from its money stringency; . . . thus it would gently be obliged to bury quickly and deeply the useless reminders of futile conflict."

It is time for Germany, if she would ever regain the respect of mankind, to dismiss such fantastic illusions as these, and to take up the burden of national responsibility in a serious sense. Let her, first of all, establish a government that will admit the responsibility of the nation for the past, and with which it is possible to deal. Then let that government assume and enforce those obligations which a just peace will certainly impose upon the German nation; not forgetting that the greatest possible calamity to mankind would be to write into the Law of Nations, by absolving the German people from complicity in a national crime, the ruinous principle that a "people" is not responsible for the government it supports, and that it may therefore exempt itself from merited punishment by merely changing its form of government.

Has Germany the character to stand this test? When she has proved her ability to do so, then, and only then, can there be a possibility, when years of fidelity have established her good faith, of admitting her to a place in a League of Nations. If those who are gathering to conclude peace now cannot enforce that judgment, then it is more than futile to hope to enforce such a judgment in the future; for the contingencies of a future in which so great a crime was left unpunished would be simply appalling to contemplate.

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